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Text: Presidential Proclamation for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Bush honors life and legacy of civil rights leader

(begin text)

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary
(Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt)
January 16, 2008

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., FEDERAL HOLIDAY, 2008

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., changed our Nation forever through his leadership, service, and clarity of vision. On the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday, we honor the lasting legacy of this great American, remember the ideals for which he fought, and recommit ourselves to ensuring that our country's promise extends to all Americans across this great land.

In the brief time Dr. King walked upon this earth, he devoted his life to strengthening the content of the American character and called on our Nation to live up to its founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all its citizens. Dr. King's faith in the Almighty gave him the courage to confront discrimination and segregation, and he preached that all the powers of evil are ultimately no match for even one individual armed with eternal truths. Through his determination, spirit, and resolve, Dr. King helped lift souls and lead one of the greatest movements for equality and freedom in history.

Our Nation has made progress toward realizing Dr. King's dream, yet the work to achieve liberty and justice for all is never-ending. In July of 2006, I was honored to sign the "Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006," to renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and reaffirm our commitment to securing the voting rights of all Americans. My Administration will continue to protect the rights won through the sacrifice of Dr. King and other civil rights leaders, and our country will never rest until equality is real, opportunity is universal, and all citizens are empowered to realize their dreams.

As we observe Dr. King's birthday, I encourage all Americans to celebrate his memory by performing acts of kindness through service to others. Let us live out Dr. King's teachings as we continue to work for the day when the dignity and humanity of every person is respected.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim January 21, 2008, as the Martin Luther King, Jr., Federal Holiday. I encourage all Americans to observe this day with appropriate civic, community, and service programs and activities in honor of Dr. King's life and legacy.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of January, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

GEORGE W. BUSH

(end text)

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr



" I have a dream...

I have a dream that one day little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers

I have a dream today"

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born on January 15, 1929 in Atlanta Georgia. His father was the minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, as was his father before him "M.L.," as he was called, lived with his parents, his sister and brother in Atlanta Ga. Their home was not far from the church his father preached at

M.L.'s mother and father taught their children what would become an important part of M.L.'s life - to treat all people with respect. Martin's father worked hard to break down the barriers between the races. His father believed African-Americans should register their complaints by voting.

As M.L. grew up he found that not everyone followed his parents principles. He noticed that "black" people and white people were treated differently. He saw that he and his white friends could not drink from the same water fountains and could not use the same restrooms

M.L.'s best friend as a child was a white boy and as children they played happily together. But when they reached school age the friends found that even though they lived in the same neighborhood, they could not go to the same school. M.L.'s friend would go to a school for white children only and M.L. was sent to a school for "black" children. After the first day of school M.L. and his friend were never allowed to play together again

When M.L. was ready for college he decided to follow his father and become a minister. While attending the Crozer Theological seminary in Pennsylvania he became familiar with Mahatma Gandhi, who had struggled to free the people of India from British rule by "peaceful revolution"

M.L. was also inspired by the work of Henry David Thoreau, particularly his essay called "Civil Disobedience." It stated that if enough people would follow their conscience and disobey unjust laws, they could bring about a peaceful revolution

It was also at college that M.L. met a young woman named Coretta Scott and they would eventually marry. In 1954 M.L. received his PhD. and accepted the job of pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama

Martin Luther King, Jr. would now be addressed as "Dr. King"

Dr. King's involvement with the civil rights movement began with the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks on December 1st, 1955. Mrs. Parks, a African-American seamstress on her way home from work, was arrested for not giving a white bus rider her seat. Mrs. Parks was not the first African-American to be arrested for this "crime", but she was well known in the Montgomery African-American community

Dr. King and the other African-American community leaders felt a protest was needed. The African-American residents of the city were asked to boycott the bus company by walking and driving instead. The United States Supreme Court would end the boycott, which lasted 381 days, by declaring that Alabama's state and local laws requiring segregation on buses were illegal. The boycott was a success and Dr. King had showed that peaceful mass action could bring about change

In January 1957 the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed with Dr. King as their president. The following May 17, Dr. King would lead a mass march of 37,000 people to the front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC

Dr. King had become the undisputed leader of the civil rights movement

Partly in response to the march, on September 9, 1957, the US Congress created the Civil Rights Commission and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice, an official body with the authority to investigate voting irregularities

Dr. King and the SCLC organized drives for African-American voter registration, desegregation, and better education and housing throughout the South. Dr. King continued to speak. He went to many cities and towns. He was greeted by crowds of people who wanted to hear him speak. He said all people have the right to equal treatment under the law. Many people believed in these civil rights and worked hard for them

Dr. King was asked constantly to speak. So in order to spend more time with his family he wrote his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom* which was a success. While signing copies of his book in Harlem, NY an African-American woman stepped forward and plunged a letter opener into Dr. King's chest. Dr. King recovered from his wound and the woman was eventually declared insane

In February 1959 Dr. and Mrs. King went to India, the homeland of Mahatma Gandhi. In India Dr. King studied Satyagraha, Gandhi's principle of nonviolent persuasion. Dr. King was determined to use Satyagraha as his main instrument of social protest

After his return to America, Dr. King returned home to Atlanta, Ga. where he shared the ministerial duties of the Ebenezer Baptist Church with his father. The move also brought Dr. King closer to the center of the growing civil rights movement

In January 1963 Dr. King announced he and the Freedom Riders would go to Birmingham to fight the segregation laws. An injunction was issued forbidding any demonstrations and Dr. King and the others were arrested

Upon his release there were more peaceful demonstrations. The police retaliated with water hoses, tear gas and dogs. All this happened in the presence of television news cameras. It would be the first time the world would see the brutality that the southern African-Americans endured. The news coverage would help bring about changes as many Americans were disgusted and ashamed by the cruelty and hatred

Continuing the fight for civil rights and to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, on August 28, 1963 200,000 people gathered in the front to the Lincoln Memorial. It was a peaceful protest, made up of African-Americans and whites, young and old. Most had come to hear Dr. King deliver his famous "I have a dream" speech

1964 would be a good year for Dr. King and the civil rights movement. Dr. King was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize as someone who "had contributed the most to the furtherance of peace among men." Dr. King would divide the prize money, \$54,000, among various civil rights organizations

President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law. It guaranteed that "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination"

In the winter of 1965 Dr. King lead a march from Selma, Alabama to the state capital in Montgomery to demand voting reforms. 600 marchers would begin the march but after 6 blocks the marchers were met by a wall of state troopers. When the troopers with clubs, whips and tear gas advanced on the marchers it was described "as a battle zone." The marchers were driven back while on the sidewalks whites cheered. 2 ministers, 1 white and 1 African-American, were killed and over 70 were injured with 17 hospitalized. It was the most violent confrontation Dr. King had experienced

A court order overturning the injunction against the march was issued and the marchers were allowed to proceed. When they arrived in Montgomery the marchers were greeted by 25,000 supporters singing "We Shall Overcome." On August 6, 1965 a voting rights bill was passed allowing African-Americans to vote

Dr. King believed that poverty caused much of the unrest in America. Not only poverty for African-Americans, but poor whites, Hispanics and Asians. Dr. King believed that the United States involvement in Vietnam was also a factor and that the war poisoned the atmosphere of the whole country and made the solution of local problems of human relations unrealistic

This caused friction between King and the African-American leaders who felt that their problems deserved priority and that the African-American leadership should concentrate on fighting racial injustice at home. But by early 1967 Dr. King had become associated with the antiwar movement

Dr. King continued his campaign for world peace. He traveled across America to support and speak out about civil rights and the rights of the underprivileged

In April 1968 Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee to help the sanitation workers who were on strike. On April 3rd Dr. King would give what would be his last speech:

"We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I have been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now.

I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land.

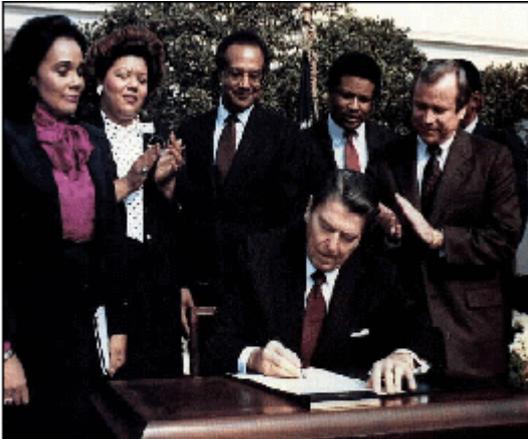
I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm not fearing any man.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"

The following day, April 4 1968, as he was leaving his motel room Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot and killed.

The Meaning of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

By Coretta Scott King



President Ronald Reagan signs legislation enacting the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday celebrates the life and legacy of a man who brought hope and healing to America. We commemorate as well the timeless values he taught us through his example - the values of courage, truth, justice, compassion, dignity, humility and service that so radiantly defined Dr. King's character and empowered his leadership. On this holiday, we commemorate the universal, unconditional love, forgiveness and nonviolence that empowered his revolutionary spirit.

We commemorate Dr. King's inspiring words, because his voice and his vision filled a great void in our nation, and answered our collective longing

to become a country that truly lived by its noblest principles. Yet, Dr. King knew that it wasn't enough just to talk the talk, that he had to walk the walk for his words to be credible. And so we commemorate on this holiday the man of action, who put his life on the line for freedom and justice every day, the man who braved threats and jail and beatings and who ultimately paid the highest price to make democracy a reality for all Americans.

The King Holiday honors the life and contributions of America's greatest champion of racial justice and equality, the leader who not only dreamed of a color-blind society, but who also led a movement that achieved historic reforms to help make it a reality.

On this day we commemorate Dr. King's great dream of a vibrant, multiracial nation united in justice, peace and reconciliation; a nation that has a place at the table for children of every race and room at the inn for every needy child. We are called on this holiday, not merely to honor, but to celebrate the values of equality, tolerance and interracial sister and brotherhood he so compellingly expressed in his great dream for America.

It is a day of interracial and intercultural cooperation and sharing. No other day of the year brings so many peoples from different cultural backgrounds together in such a vibrant spirit of brother and sisterhood. Whether you are African-American, Hispanic or Native American, whether you are Caucasian or Asian-American, you are part of the great dream Martin Luther King, Jr. had for America. This is not a black holiday; it is a peoples' holiday. And it is the young people of all races and religions who hold the keys to the fulfillment of his dream.

We commemorate on this holiday the ecumenical leader and visionary who embraced the unity of all faiths in love and truth. And though we take patriotic pride that Dr. King was an American, on this holiday we must also commemorate the global leader who inspired nonviolent liberation movements around the world. Indeed, on this day, programs commemorating my husband's birthday are being observed in more than 100 nations.

The King Holiday celebrates Dr. King's global vision of the world house, a world whose people and nations had triumphed over poverty, racism, war and violence. The holiday celebrates his vision of ecumenical solidarity, his insistence that all faiths had something meaningful to contribute to building the beloved community.

The Holiday commemorates America's pre-eminent advocate of nonviolence --- the man who taught by his example that nonviolent action is the most powerful, revolutionary force for social change available to oppressed people in their struggles for liberation.

This holiday honors the courage of a man who endured harassment, threats and beatings, and even bombings. We commemorate the man who went to jail 29 times to achieve freedom for others, and who knew he would pay the ultimate price for his leadership, but kept on marching and protesting and organizing anyway.

Every King holiday has been a national "teach-in" on the values of nonviolence, including unconditional love, tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation, which are so desperately-needed to unify America. It is a day of intensive education and training in Martin's philosophy and methods of nonviolent social change and conflict-reconciliation. The Holiday provides a unique opportunity to teach young people to fight evil, not people, to get in the habit of asking themselves, "what is the most loving way I can resolve this conflict?"

On the King holiday, young people learn about the power of unconditional love even for one's adversaries as a way to fight injustice and defuse violent disputes. It is a time to show them the power of forgiveness in the healing process at the interpersonal as well as international levels.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is not only for celebration and remembrance, education and tribute, but above all a day of service. All across America on the Holiday, his followers perform service in hospitals and shelters and prisons and wherever people need some help. It is a day of volunteering to feed the hungry, rehabilitate housing, tutoring those who can't read, mentoring at-risk youngsters, consoling the broken-hearted and a thousand other projects for building the beloved community of his dream.

Dr. King once said that we all have to decide whether we "will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness. Life's most persistent and nagging question, he said, is 'what are you doing for others?'" he would quote Mark 9:35, the scripture in which Jesus of Nazareth tells James and John "...whosoever will be great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever among you will be the first shall be the servant of all." And when Martin talked about the end of his mortal life in one of his last sermons, on February 4, 1968 in the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church, even then he lifted up the value of service as the hallmark of a full life. "I'd like somebody to mention on that day Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others," he said. "I want you to say on that day, that I did try in my life...to love and serve humanity.

We call you to commemorate this Holiday by making your personal commitment to serve humanity with the vibrant spirit of unconditional love that was his greatest strength, and which empowered all of the great victories of his leadership. And with our hearts open to this spirit of unconditional love, we can indeed achieve the Beloved Community of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream.

May we who follow Martin now pledge to serve humanity, promote his teachings and carry forward his legacy into the 21st Century.

The King Center - Atlanta, GA

Martin Luther King Speeches **Excerpts from King's most famous addresses**

The success of Martin Luther King's non-violent movement against segregation and injustice in the American south owes much to his visionary and inspirational eloquence. The following are excerpts from King's most popular speeches, according to the [Martin Luther King, Jr., Paper Project at Stanford University](#).

Letter from Birmingham Jail — April 16, 1963

While jailed for leading anti-segregation protests in Birmingham, King wrote this letter arguing that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws.

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly I have never yet engaged in a direct action movement that was "well timed," according to the timetable of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with a piercing familiarity. This "wait" has almost always meant "never." We must come to see with the distinguished jurist of yesterday that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."

Full text:

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom — August 28, 1963

The March on Washington took place in Washington, D.C., and was attended by 250,000 people. King's speech at the March remains one of the most famous speeches in American history. King started with prepared remarks but then departed from his script, shifting into the "I have a dream" theme he'd used on prior occasions, speaking of an America where his children "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." He followed this with an exhortation to "let freedom ring" across the nation, and concluded with:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my

four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.

Full text:

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/speeches/address_at_march_on_washington.pdf

Acceptance Speech at Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony — December 10, 1964

At age 35, King became the youngest man to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. When he learned of the honor, he announced that he would donate all of the prize money (\$54,123) to the civil rights movement.

Therefore, I must ask why this prize is awarded to a movement which is beleaguered and committed to unrelenting struggle, and to a movement which has not yet won the very peace and brotherhood which is the essence of the Nobel Prize. After contemplation, I conclude that this award, which I receive on behalf of that movement, is a profound recognition that nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time: the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to violence and oppression.

Full text:

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/speeches/acceptance_speech_at_nobel_peace.htm

Beyond Vietnam — April 4, 1967

By 1967, King had become a passionate opponent of the Vietnam War. In this speech delivered at the Riverside Church in New York City, King referred to the United States "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

Perhaps the more tragic recognition of reality took place when it became clear to me that the war was doing far more than devastating the hopes of the poor at home. It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. So we watch them in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit. I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.

Full text:

http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/publications/speeches/Beyond_Vietnam.pdf

I've Been To The Mountaintop — April 3, 1968

On the eve of a protest march for striking garbage workers in Memphis, Tenn., King gave this darkly prescient speech. The next day he was assassinated.

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Full text: <http://www.afscme.org/about/1549.cfm>

Teacher's resources

Teaching @ Tolerance

Martin Luther King dreamed of a world more tolerant than the one he lived in. These five lessons are designed to teach students about King's dream of tolerance. Included: Lessons on stereotyping, appreciating differences, recognizing how words can hurt (or heal), and more.

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson294.shtml

Martin Luther King, Jr., Teaches Many Lessons

The life of American hero Martin Luther King, Jr., offers many teaching opportunities. In these lessons, Education World presents cross-curricular and cross-grade lessons teachers can use to share King's life and legacy with students. Included: More than 20 lessons.

http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson248.shtml

Outgroup Experiment Reveals Bias, Stereotyping

Marcie Pachter, who teaches at Palm Beach Community College in Lake Worth, Florida, submitted this week's lesson, which includes an activity to let students experience the bias and stereotyping often experienced by people who are different. (Grades 6-12)

http://www.educationworld.com/a_tsl/archives/04-1/lesson002.shtml

Boston Mourns Martin Luther King, April 4, 1968

This feature from the Mass Moments website recounts the reaction in Boston to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

<http://www.massmoments.org/moment.cfm?mid=103>

Martin Luther King

The Seattle Times has developed this site about Martin Luther King and the holiday

<http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/special/mlk/index.html>